

THE KENTUCKY PLAN FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

In 1982, the Council on Higher Education developed *The Commonwealth of Kentucky Higher Education Desegregation Plan* in response to a U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR) finding that “the Commonwealth of Kentucky, in violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, has failed to eliminate the vestiges of its former de jure racially dual system of public higher education.” The duration of the original plan was five years (1982-87).

In 1987, the Commonwealth submitted a summary report to OCR on all actions taken by Kentucky under the plan. OCR released Kentucky from further data reporting in 1987 but did not act on the 1981 findings. Subsequent to the 1987 report, the council determined that additional work was needed because the postsecondary system had not achieved the goals in the original plan related to employment, retention, and graduation. The second plan was titled *The Kentucky Plan for Equal Opportunities in Higher Education (The Kentucky Plan)* and lasted from 1990-95.

In November 1995, CHE extended *The Kentucky Plan* to allow time to develop a new plan. *The Kentucky Plan 1997-2002* was developed in a legal environment in which activities previously used to promote equal opportunity were under increasing court scrutiny. The OCR and federal court decisions guided the development of the new plan. The *Kentucky Plan* is a detailed description of the Commonwealth’s commitment to eliminating the remnants of the formerly segregated system of higher education.

The Kentucky Plan 1997-2002 continues the focus on providing equal opportunity of access to and success in postsecondary education. The plan sets objectives for institutions in categories of student enrollment, retention, and graduation. It also incorporates institutionally developed objectives for employment of faculty and staff. Each of the eight public institutions participated in the development of the objectives and timetables.

Currently, institutions have achieved parity in college admission of Kentucky resident African Americans and white students but have failed to achieve parity for retention and the awarding of baccalaureate degrees.

In May 1999, the council entered into a partnership agreement with OCR to bring Kentucky into full compliance with Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the standards established in the U.S. Supreme Court decision in U.S. v. Fordice. The *Partnership Agreement* is a covenant between the Commonwealth of Kentucky and the OCR as a continuation of the ongoing efforts to provide minority students with opportunities to participate in the public higher education system. To this end, the *Kentucky Plan for Equal Opportunities in Postsecondary Education* and the *Partnership Agreement* encompass specific commitments, objectives, and action plans to enhance educational opportunities for Kentucky resident African Americans. The *Partnership Agreement* is on track to be completed by December 31, 2002. The OCR will notify Kentucky of its findings by March 2003.

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What is the Council's Committee on Equal Opportunities?

The Council's Committee on Equal Opportunities (CEO) was established in 1987 to monitor and ensure the continuation of the Commonwealth's desegregation efforts. The CEO serves in an advisory capacity to the council in implementing the equal opportunity objectives.

Each university has an agreed upon set of EEO objectives they are required to address. The council utilizes the CEO's recommendations when considering new academic program requests. The recommendation is based in part on how well the university has met its objectives and the results of a CEO campus visit.

Questions Governing Board Members Might Ask

1. What special initiatives is our institution engaged in to attract and recruit Kentucky resident African American students?
2. What are our EEO objectives?
3. Where does EEO fit among our priorities?